

Office Locations: Chattanooga,
Cookeville, Jackson, Knoxville,
Memphis, Nashville



TENNESSEE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (TENNESSEE MEP)
Serving firms throughout Tennessee through six regional offices. Affiliated with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development Department and the University of Tennessee. Contact: T.C. Parsons, , University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services, 226 Capitol Boulevard, Suite 606, Nashville, TN 37219, (615) 532-8657, Fax: (615) 532-4937, Email: tcparsons@utk.edu, Website: <http://www.cis.utk.edu/>

THE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP IN TENNESSEE

Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a nationwide system of services and support for smaller manufacturers to become more globally competitive. At the heart of the system is a network of affiliated, locally-based manufacturing extension centers. Each center, like Tennessee MEP, is a partnership, typically involving federal, state, and local governments; industry; educational institutions; and other sources of expertise, information and funding support.

COMPANY CLIPS

Mid-South Wire Gets a Breath of Fresh Air

Mid-South Wire is a privately held company with approximately 125 employees, founded in 1966 and located in Nashville, Tennessee. The company is a bulk producer of extruded and pulled wire and a material producer/supplier to domestic wire forming companies. Mid-South Wire wanted to undertake a major expansion of its wire extrusion operations, but knew that it would have to comply with strict environmental regulations, especially with regard to air quality. The company contacted the Tennessee Manufacturing Extension Partnership (TMEP) for assistance.

TMEP worked with Mid-South Wire to develop the requirements and working details of the air permit. TMEP helped the company complete the application for the construction phase of the planned expansion. TMEP also helped Mid-South Wire review its new containment structure to make sure that a proposed acid tank did not violate any flood plain restrictions.

Thanks to TMEP's assistance, Mid-South Wire obtained its air permit, correctly installed the acid tank, and moved forward on a capital investment project in excess of \$1 million. The company has already experienced an overall sales increase of \$1 million annually, and has added seven new employees to operate the new equipment.

Storm Copper Improves Competitive Position with Lean Technology Methods

Storm Copper manufactures copper bus bars and wiring harnesses for, among other customers, major high-tech telecommunications equipment manufacturers. The company, located in Decatur, Tennessee, is privately owned with a peak employment of 170. Storm

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STATE STATS

DATA* COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Number of projects completed
with firms
244

Number of firms served
348

Number of firms served for
the first time
48

Federal cost share for current
operating year
\$1,242,300

State/other cost share for current
operating year
\$2,484,600

**Data as reported from center*

DATA** COVERS JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2001

Increased sales & retained sales
\$17,751,000

Client capital investment
\$6,893,800

Total cost savings
\$14,324,262

Jobs (created & retained)
1729

***Source: Independent client impact survey*



Copper sought to streamline its operations through the implementation of lean manufacturing practices. Specific areas of desired improvement included lead-time, process time, on-time delivery rate, and product defect rate. The company contacted the Tennessee Manufacturing Extension Partnership (TMEP), which arranged a long-term engagement with Storm Copper. Over a period of several months, TMEP helped the company implement a full range of lean concepts.

TMEP staff trained every Storm Copper employee in lean manufacturing and workplace organization (5S) concepts, and trained specific Storm Copper teams on quick changeover and value stream mapping techniques to facilitate process improvements and improve productivity. As a result of these exercises, Storm Copper reduced its work-in-process inventory by 60 percent, reduced its lead time from four weeks to two days, and reduced its defective parts per million by nearly 98 percent. TMEP performed an analysis of in-plant material flow and recommended layout and process improvements, and developed a value stream map for the office to identify process improvements in that environment as well, resulting in a more efficient order entry system. Finally, TMEP applied several quality improvement tools to Storm Copper's processes.

The company became much more lean and flexible in its business and manufacturing practices, including office operations. The president of the company reports that sales increases during the first year following this assistance were \$1.5 million, and that he expects future sales to be up \$6.5 million in subsequent years. In addition to the lean assistance provided by TMEP, the company made additional capital investments amounting to \$473,000 while implementing lean systems.